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# Ying Tong

BY ROY SMILES

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THE  
GOONS



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A photograph of two roses against a clear blue sky with some light clouds. One rose is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, and the other is further back, also slightly out of focus. The roses are light-colored, possibly white or light pink. The stems and leaves are dark.

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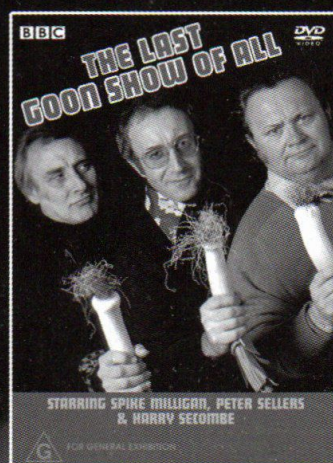
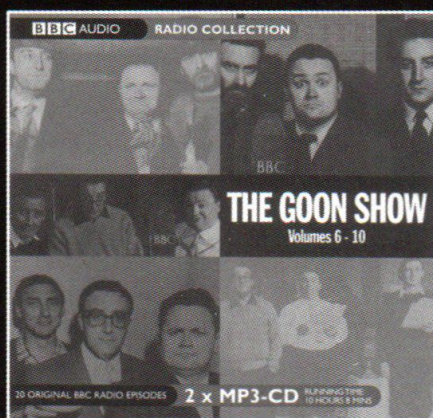
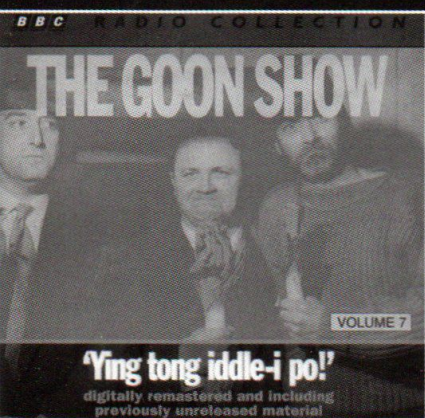
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## Dead Caesar lives!

By Chris Taylor

With Ben Borgia, Alan Dukes, Andrew Hansen, John Leary, Ewen Leslie, Toby Moore  
Director Tamara Cook

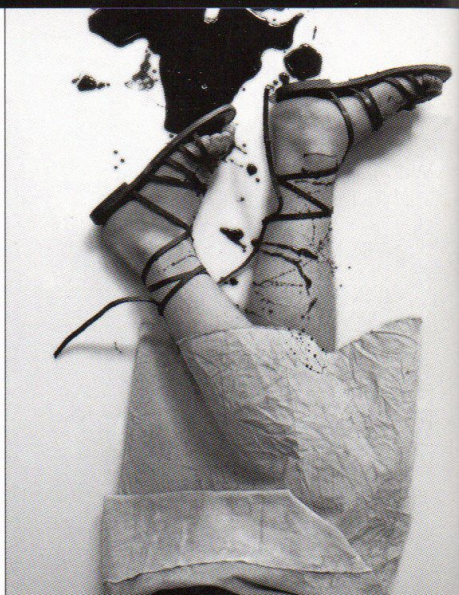
Just when you thought it was safe... he's back, and he's wearing a toga!

*Dead Caesar* is the utterly hilarious comic romp from writer Chris Taylor and composer Andrew Hansen, best known for their collaboration on the wildly successful TV satire *The Chaser*. A sell-out success in its original Wharf 2LOUD Push season, *Dead Caesar* returns to Wharf 2 for strictly limited encore. Don't miss this mad and filthy re-telling of the Julius Caesar story... the only version to leave you with a feel-good massacre song to hum going home.

From 4 July, Wharf 2  
[wharf2loud.com](http://wharf2loud.com)



Wharf 2LOUD  
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## The Taming of the Shrew

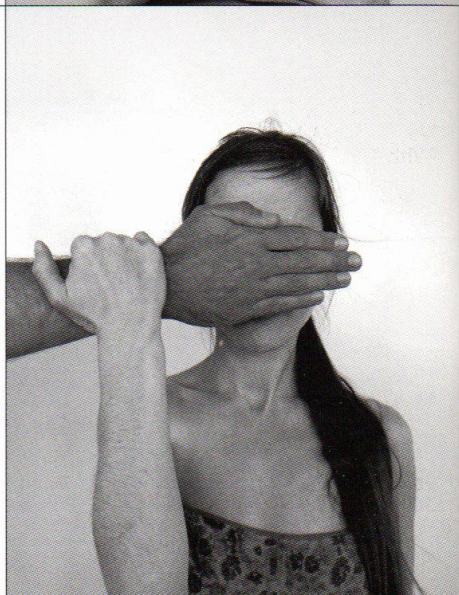
By William Shakespeare

Director Rachel McDonald

In this early comedy was Shakespeare really saying that a husband should be a woman's lord, life, keeper and sovereign? This is a play that polarises audiences and artists – but either way it leaps off the page into a dream world where two fantasies are explored: the strong woman's desire for a man who does not fear her; and the male dream of dominating a wild cat.

Experience this special production, part of Sydney Theatre Company's Education program.

From 25 May, Wharf 2  
Evening Performances (for the general public): 28 May, 5 June, 6 June at 7pm.



## 2008 Subscription Season Competition

Here's your chance to rub shoulders with the A-list at STC's Opening Nights in 2008, and help to raise funds for the Sydney Theatre Company Foundation. The winner of this fantastic draw will receive an Opening Night package including 2 tickets to each subscription season Opening Night in 2008. This total package is valued at more than \$3,500.

Proceeds of the competition will help fund Sydney Theatre Company's education and artform development programs. Tickets are \$50 each and are available by contacting the STC Development Department on 9250 1717 or [glepoertrench@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:glepoertrench@sydneytheatre.com.au). Tickets can be purchased up until 5:00pm on Thursday, 23 August 2006. The winner will be drawn at The Wharf, Pier 4, Hickson Road, Walsh Bay, on Friday, 24 August 2007 at 12:00pm. The winner will be notified by mail, and will be published in the September edition of STC e-news and the next *Currents*.

An entry form and full terms and conditions of the competition are available at [sydneytheatre.com.au](http://sydneytheatre.com.au).





Wharf 2LOUD presents

## Self Esteem

By Brendan Cowell

With Russell Kiefel, Betty Lucas, Robin McLeavy, Heather Mitchell,  
Tim Richards, Toby Schmitz, Rod Smith  
Director Brendan Cowell

CHAD is coming to save you. CHAD is a strike-force of identically cloned males in their early twenties. CHAD, your CHAD, arrives tonight. *Self Esteem* is the new black comedy from Brendan Cowell (*Love My Way, Bed*) about an everyday Australian family changed forever by CHAD. Suddenly Mum's in lycra. Dad's plagued by rats and Rick discovers the relationship between flesh, the internet and credit cards. But Lucy, well, she won't budge. Self-abuse, self-deception and self-medication don't equal self-esteem. Not in her backyard.

From 20 April, Wharf 2  
[wharf2loud.com](http://wharf2loud.com)



Wharf 2LOUD  
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Sydney Theatre Company and Audi present

## The Art of War

By Stephen Jeffreys

With The STC Actors Company

Director Annabel Arden

Sun Tzu's two-and-a-half thousand year old manual, one of the most influential treatises on warfare, is reconfigured as a new drama by Stephen Jeffreys, specially commissioned for the STC Actors Company. Here three narratives collide – a love story, party political venality and corporate manoeuvring, using war as a model for life, relationships and making money. As the stories progress through these compelling worlds of passion, finance and intrigue, Sun Tzu's crucial philosophy that victory should arrive without war, is increasingly ignored – to shattering effect.

'Stephen Jeffreys is London's best kept secret. What he doesn't know about playwriting isn't worth knowing' Stephen Daldry

From 14 May, Wharf 1



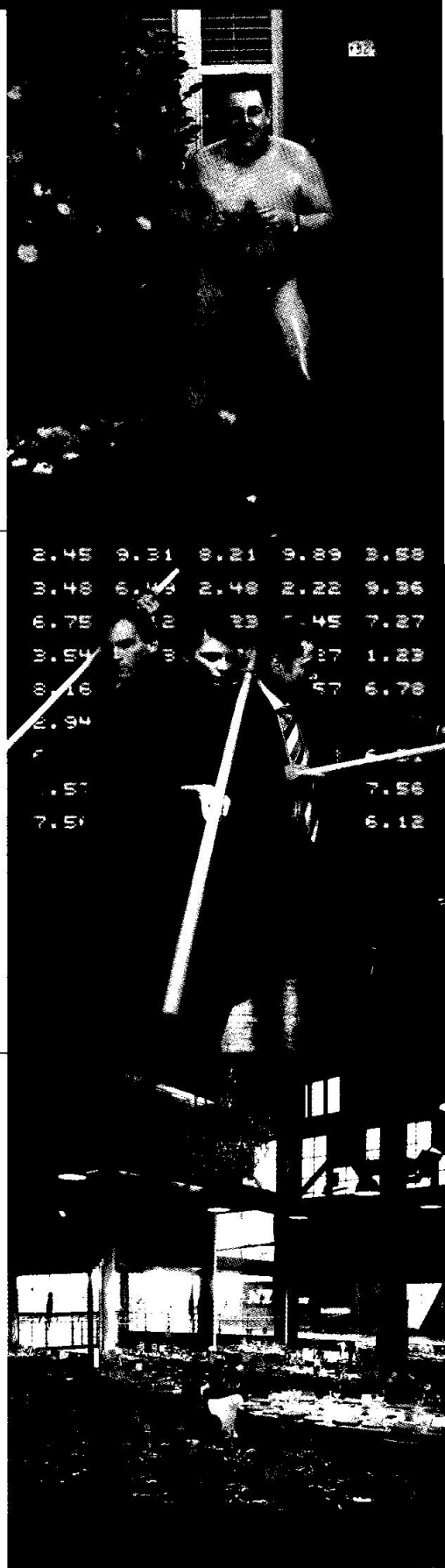
## First Act: STC's Annual Fundraising Gala

Save the evening of Monday 18 June now to join Sydney Theatre Company's Artistic Director, Robyn Nevin, at the company's annual fundraising dinner and auction. This event will feature performances showcasing the unique talents of STC's artists, divine food from Tim Pak Poy and Aaron Ross's Wharf Restaurant kitchen, and the chance to acquire fantastic items and exclusive experiences in the silent auction.

Funds raised support STC's education program which subsidises the attendance of 30,000 primary and secondary school students at theatre performances annually, and Wharf 2LOUD which offers new opportunities to emerging theatre artists.

We need you, our subscribers and theatre lovers, to support our work in nurturing Australian creative talent. Please join us at this great fundraising event. For more information please contact Georgina Le Poer Trench, Philanthropy Coordinator, (02) 9250 1717 or [glepoertrench@sydneytheatre.com.au](mailto:glepoertrench@sydneytheatre.com.au)

# WHAT'S COMING UP







# YingTong<sup>BY ROY SMILES</sup> A WALK WITH THE GOONS

## CAST

Spike Milligan **GEOFF KELSO**  
Peter Sellers **JONATHAN BIGGINS**  
Harry Secombe **DAVID JAMES**  
Wallace Greenslade **TONY HARVEY**

Director **RICHARD COTTRELL**  
Set and Costume Designer **MICHAEL SCOTT-MITCHELL**  
Lighting Designer **DAMIEN COOPER**  
Sound Effects Designer **PAUL CHARLIER**  
Sound Designer **JEREMY SILVER**  
Assistant Director **JOHN SHEEDY**  
Singing Coach **JEREMY POWELL**  
Fight Consultant **KYLE ROWLING**  
Production Manager **JANET EADES**  
Stage Manager **JOHN REID**  
Deputy Stage Manager **KATE SMITH**  
Assistant Stage Manager (on tour) **EMMA BEAUREPAIRE**  
Hair, Wig & Make-up Supervisor **LAUREN A. PROIETTI**  
Production Photographer **HEIDRUN LÖHR**

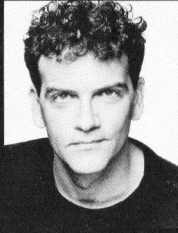
This production opened 14 April at the Sydney Opera House Drama Theatre.  
There will be one interval.





**JONATHAN BIGGINS**  
Peter Sellers

For Sydney Theatre Company: **As Performer:** includes *Summer Rain*, *Soulmates*. **As Writer/Director:** includes *The End of the Wharf As We Know It*, *Sunday In Iraq With George*, *Free Petrol*, *Fast and Loose*, *Best We Forget*, *Revue Sans Frontiers*, *The Republic of Myopia*. **Other theatre:** includes for MTC: *The Importance of Being Earnest*. For QTC: *The Venetian Twins*. For VSO: *Ruddigore*. For Essgee Productions: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. For Tilbury Hotel: *A Broad With Two Men*. For State Opera of South Australia: *The Mikado*. For Glen Street Theatre: *The Best Bits of That Broad and Those Men*. For Opera Australia: *Orpheus In The Underworld*, *The Mikado*, *Fledermaus*. **TV/Film/Radio:** *The Dingo Principle*, *Noah's Ark*, *World Series Debating*, *Good News Week*, *The Party Machine*, *Thank God He Met Lizzie*, *Those Dear Departed*. **Other:** Jonathan is perhaps best known as a writer and performer of revue. With Drew Forsythe and Phillip Scott he created *Three Men and a Baby Grand*, which toured Australia, then went to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival before becoming a ten-part ABC Television series. He's also written two books, *As it Were* and *The 700 Habits of Highly Ineffective People*.



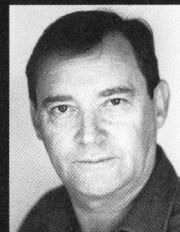
**TONY HARVEY**  
Wallace Greenslade

For Sydney Theatre Company: *Barrymore*. **Other theatre:** For Disney Theatrical: *The Lion King* (Sydney, Melbourne, Shanghai), *Beauty And The Beast*. For Monkey Baa: *Worry Warts*. For Moira Blumenthal: *Earl*. For Jacobsen Entertainment: *Lend Me A Tenor*, *Return To The Forbidden Planet*, *Fame*. For Really Useful Productions: *The Graduate*. For The Production Company: *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*. For Adelaide Festival Centre Trust: *Me And My Girl*, *Guys And Dolls*. For Sydney Opera House Trust: *You're Gonna Love Tomorrow*, *Simply Weill*. For Q Theatre: *Pearls Before Swine*. **Film:** *The Wiggles Movie*, *As Happy As Larry*, *The Night We Called It A Day*, *Kokoda*, *Crescent*, *Young Einstein*, *Starstruck*, *The Killing Of Angel Street*. **TV:** *Love My Way*, *Blonde*, *Time Trax*, *Gluttony*, *Home And Away*, *Grim Pickings*, *Rafferty's Rules*, *Sons And Daughters*, *A Country Practice*, *All The King's Men*, *A Town Like Alice*, *Captain James Cook*, *The Timeless Land*, *The Restless Years*.



**DAVID JAMES**

*Ado About Nothing*, *Pericles*, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*. For Marian St Theatre: *Broadway Bound*, *Labour Day*. For Pork Chop: *Ruby's Last Dollar*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. For Griffin: *Alive at Williamstown Pier*. For Riverina Theatre Co: *Bouncers*, *The Popular Mechanicals*. For NIDA Company: *No Names*, *No Pack Drill*. For Q Theatre: *Kenny's Coming Home*. For Sydney Festival: *Short Circuits*. For Universal Theatre: *Up 'N Under*. For Gateway Commercial Productions: *Ladies Night*. For Illustrious Theatre Co: *Dylan*. **Film:** *Rage in Placid Lake*, *Prick*, *Fine*, *The Birthday Present*, *Operation Sex Drive*, *White Noise*. **TV:** *The Postcard Bandit*, *Australians At War*, *All Saints*, *Backbender*, *Water Rats*, *GP*, *Seven Deadly Sins*, *Police Rescue*, *The Flying Doctors*. **Other:** David is perhaps best known as a presenter of ABC's *Playschool*, also touring nationally as part of its live concert program. **Training:** NIDA.



**GEOFF KELSO**  
Spike Milligan

For Sydney Theatre Company: *Democracy*. **Other theatre:** For Company B: *As You Like It*, *Welcome To Broome*, *Up The Road*, *Dead Heart*, *Royal Commission into the Australian Economy*. For Black Swan Theatre Company: *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Yandy*, *Copenhagen*, *ART*, *One Destiny*, *Popcorn*, *The Floating World*, *Waiting for*

*Theatre Company: Paddy*. For The Pinjarra Project: *Bidenjarreb Pinjarra* (toured throughout Australia including the Sydney Olympic Festival of The Dreaming in 1997) For Opera Australia/WA Opera: *Die Fledermaus* (Perth, Sydney & Melbourne). For State Theatre Company of WA: *The Country Wife*, *Model Citizen*. For Hole in The Wall Theatre Company: *The Recruiting Officer*, *Our Country's Good*, *Season's Greetings*. **Stand Up Comedy:** All major comedy venues in Sydney and Melbourne, 1978-1989. **Radio:** *Dr Poo* (2DoubleJay 1979-1981). **Film:** *My Shout*, *Frankie's Story*, *Where The Two Rivers Meet*, *Aftershocks*. **Television:** *Good News Week*, *The Gillies Report*, *The Dingo Principle*, *Sleepover Club*, *Streetsmartz*, *Sharknet*, *Southern Cross*. **Awards:** 2003 Best Actor WA Equity Award, 1991 Best Actor Swan Gold Award, 1977 National Theatre Awards: Best Actor [WA] and Best New Talent [WA].



**RICHARD COTTRELL**  
Director

For Sydney Theatre Company: *Vita and Virginia*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Lettice and Lovage*. **Other Theatre:** For Nimrod: *Arms and the Man*, *Wild Honey*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. For Belvoir Street: *When the Wind Blows*. For STCSA: *The Revenger's Tragedy*. For Marian Street: *Things We Do for Love*, *Neville's Island*, *Henceforward*. For Jane Street: *Camino*

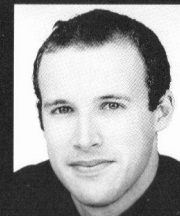
*Lady Windermere's Fan*. For Bristol Old Vic: includes *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cabaret*, *Destiny*, *The Provok'd Wife*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Seagull*. For Stratford, Ontario: *Richard II*, *The Country Wife*, *All's Well That End Well*. For Playwrights' Horizons, New York: *The Uneasy Chair*. For E59E, New York: *The Woman Destroyed*. For Canadian Stage Company: *Indian Ink*. For National Theatre, Portugal: *King Lear*. **Opera:** For VSO: *Andrea Chenier*, *Tannhäuser*. For Opera Theatre of St. Louis: *The Merry Widow*. **Translations:** plays by Feydeau, Ionesco, Racine, Chekhov. **Adaptations:** *Howard's End*, *A Room With A View*, *The Longest Journey*. **Positions:** Artistic Director, Bristol Old Vic, Associate Director, Stratford Ontario, Artistic Director, Nimrod Theatre. **Training:** As an actor in Paris.



**MICHAEL SCOTT-MITCHELL**  
Designer

For Sydney Theatre Company: 23 productions including *Amigos*, *Major Barbara*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Life of Galileo*, *As You Like It*, *The Trackers of Oxyrhyncus*, *Dead Funny*, *Les Parents Terribles*. **Other theatre:** Inaugural designer for Bell Shakespeare: 11 productions including *Troilus & Cressida*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* (twice). For MTC/QTC: *The Tempest*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *Navigating*. For Company B/ MTC: *The Unexpected Man*. For Company B: *Diving for Pearls*.

*Cabaret*. For ATYP: *Macbeth*. For Harry M Miller: *Pageant*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* (arena & stage productions). For ACTA: *Dazzle of Shadow*. For The R Company, San Francisco: *The Ancient Mariner*. **Opera:** OA's *Andre Chenier*, *L'elisir d'Amore*, *Rinaldo*, *Tannhäuser*, *The Puccini Spectacular*. **SOSA's:** *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Il Trovatore*. **Other design & concept credits:** include the Cauldron and Opening Ceremony Stage, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Cauldron, Ceremonial Stages and several sections of the Cultural Presentation for the Asian Games Doha 2006. **Awards:** 2005 Helpmann Award, Best Scenic Design for *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Green Room Award, Best Opera Design for *L'elisir d'Amore*. Adelaide Critics Award for *Il Trovatore* (SOSA), The Chief Glugg's Award for *Les Parents Terribles*. **Positions:** Michael lectures in Theatre Design at UTS and NIDA and sits on the Board of Studies for NIDA. A founding director of D4Design, responsible for designing the multi-award winning Rockpool Restaurant & Regents Court Hotel. **Other:** Michael's photographs documenting his designs for *Der Ring des Nibelungen* have recently been acquired by the National Library of Australia. **Training:** Studied architecture at Sydney University before receiving a Bachelor of Dramatic Art-Design from NIDA.



**DAMIEN COOPER**  
Lighting Designer

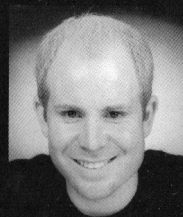
For Sydney Theatre Company:



*King Lear*, *Morph*, *These People* (Blueprints). **Other Theatre:** For Company B: *Keating*, *Peribanez*, *Stuff Happens*, *The Chairs*, *The Spook*, *In Our Name*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Underpants*, *The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in the Former Soviet Union*, *The Ham Funeral*. For Ensemble Theatre: *Ten Unknowns*, *Old Times*. For Performing Lines: *Three Furies*, *Theft of Sita*. For Bell Shakespeare: *Moby Dick*. For New Theatricals: *The Woman in Black*, David Hare's *Via Dolorosa*. For QTC: *Away*. For Opera Australia: *Alcina*, *The Magic Flute*. For Sydney Dance Company: *Director's Cut*, *Grand*, *Some Rooms*, *Shades Of Gray*, *Air* and other *Invisible Forces*, *Mythologia*, *Body of Work*, *Ellipse*. For Australian Ballet: *Tivoli*, *Swan Lake*. For Australian Dance Theatre: *Nothing*, *The Age of Unbeauty*, *Plastic Space*, *Birdbrain*, *Attention Deficit Theory*. For Chunky Move: *Spectre in the Covert*, *Memory*, *Corrupted 2*, *Body parts*, *Fleshmeet*. For Legs on the Wall: *Under the Influence*, *Homelands*, *Runners Up*. For Flying Fruit Fly Circus: *Fusion*, *The Gift*. For Adelaide Festival: *Universal Playground*, *Flamma Flamma*, *Red Square*. For Sydney Opera House: *Honour Bound*, *Lord of the Rings Symphony*. **Positions:** Tutor and Lecturer in Lighting Design NIDA. **Awards:** Sydney Theatre Award for Best Lighting Design for *The Lost Echo*. Sydney Critics Award Best Lighting Design for *Summer Rain*, Mike Walsh Fellowship 2003. **Training:** NIDA Technical Production 1996.

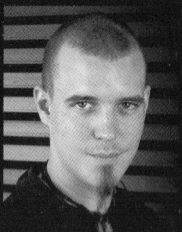
*Scenes from a Separation*, *The Miser*, *Victory*, *Amigos*, *The Way of the World*, *Soulmates*, *The Floating World*, *Heartbreak House*. **Other theatre:** For Sydney Opera House/Malthouse: *Honour Bound*. For Force Majeure: *Already Elsewhere*. For Porkchop Productions: *Ruby's Last Dollar*, *Last Cab to Darwin*. For Black Swan: *Live Acts on Stage*. For Company B: *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Buried Child*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *The Seagull*, *WASP*, *A View From The Bridge*, *The Blind Giant is Dancing*, *Aftershocks*. For DV8 Physical Theatre: *Can We Afford This?* For STCSA: *The Fire on the Snow*, *The Shifting Heart*, *A Little Like Drowning*. For Entr'Acte: *Eclipse*, *Possessed/Dispossessed*. For Stalker Theatre: *Blood Vessel*. For Griffin: *Presence*, *Chilling and Killing my Annabel Lee*. TV: *Aftershocks*, *One Australia*. Film: *Candy*, *Green Eyes*. **Sydney Theatre Company; Sound Design:** *Democracy*, *The Real Thing*, *The Breath Of Life*, *Copenhagen*, *Three Days of Rain*, *A Cheery Soul* (co-production with Company B). **Other theatre:** Company B: *The Underpants*, *Waiting For Godot*, *My Zinc Bed*, *The Little Cherry Orchard*, *As You Like It*, *The Judas Kiss*, *The Alchemist*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, *The Governor's Family*, *Hamlet*, *Radiance*, *A Little Like Drowning*. Film: *Looking for Alibrandi*, *The Projectionist*. **Installations:** *Powerhouse Museum: Transport*. *Those Final Moments*, *Proxy*.

*Daughter*, *The Prospectors*. For Griffin Theatre: *The Peach Season*. For TRS/Sydney Opera House: *Cross Sections*. For Company B: *Gates of Egypt*, *Stuff Happens*, *Run Rabbit Run*. For TRS: *This Blasted Earth*, *Woyzeck*, *Little Boy*, *Crazy Brave*, *Thrall*. For Q Theatre: *Somewhere, Car Gods Burn*. For Darlinghurst: *The Internationalist*, *Matt and Ben*, *Whale Music*. For Stablemates/TRS: *Constance Drinkwater* and *The Final Days of Somerset*. **As Producer:** *Chicks Will Dig You!* Film: *Outside*, *First Date*.



**JOHN SHEEDY**  
Assistant Director

**For Sydney Theatre Company:** **As Assistant Director:** *Doubt*. **As Director:** *Brecht Workshops (Education)*. **Other theatre:** **As Director:** For the Old Fitzroy Hotel: *Sold*. For Darlinghurst: *Some Explicit Polaroids*. For NIDA: *Closer*, *The Return*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Who's Afraid of the Working Class*. For WAAPA: *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love*. For Curtin University: *Terrorism* (co-production with Black Swan Theatre Company). For B Sharp: *Love*, *Blasted*, *Sink or Swim*. **As Assistant Director:** For Company B: *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*. **Other:** Belvoir St 24hr Play Project, 2005, 2006 Theatrelab. **Awards:** Best Director Runner-up 2006 Melbourne Short and Sweet Festival. **Training:** NIDA Director's Course.



**JEREMY SILVER**  
Sound Designer



**PAUL CHARLIER**

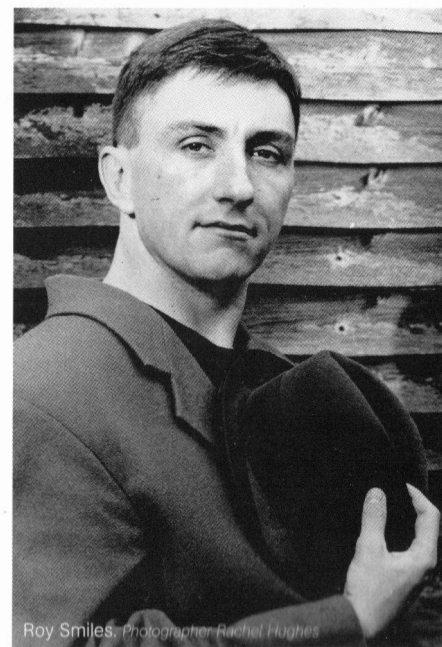


David James, Jonathan Biggins, Geoff Kelso, Tony Harvey

## ROY SMILES

Roy Smiles is from West London. His many plays include: *Top of the Town*, *Danny Boy*, *The Promised Land*, *Stand Up*, *Roberto Calvi Is Alive & Well*, *The Little Green Monkey Club*, *Lunatics' Tango*, *Bombing People* and his 'Dead Comedian's Trilogy': *Ying Tong* (The Goons), *The Lad Himself* (Tony Hancock) and *Schmucks* (Groucho Marx/Lenny Bruce). *Ying Tong* got to London's West End – The New Ambassadors Theatre – and has also been performed in New Zealand and South Africa. The English producer of *Ying Tong* – Michael Codron – is producing his latest play *Year of the Rat* (about George Orwell's attempts to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) in the West End later this year.

"Spike was the godfather of alternative comedy. The Pythons got totally influenced and I watched Python and I was totally



Roy Smiles. Photographer Rachel Hughes



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

### ROY SMILES

I grew up in the England of the 1970s: a grey and mean land where it always rained. All skinhead gob, inflation, the three day week and losing the Cod War to Iceland. The latter being one of my country's more embarrassing moments but in our defence they threw herring and we only had bullets: the dirty rotten swines! Our navy never had a chance I tell you!

I was living at that time in West London with my brother, sister and widowed father. A Geordie of few words and those few words were: 'shut up'. But though we were poor – we were miserable. There were several gleams of comedic light midst the sobbing and the head-butting however: the God-like Dave Allen Show on BBC 1 on Tuesdays and the repeats of the *Goon Show* on Sundays on Radio 2.

Throughout the 70s my brother and I were transfixed by listening to the *Goon Show*. It was supposed to be an 'old' show but was light years ahead of just about anything else at the time – save Dave Allen. The reactionary humour of *The Comedians* and *Love Thy Neighbour* and the sitcom tedium of *Terry & June* could just not compare to a revolutionary show that came from that most conservative of decades: the 1950s.

It was surreal humour from another planet and blew away anything I've heard before or since. It wasn't just Spike Milligan's scripts which were brilliant of course. Peter Sellers remains, for me, the finest comic actor of my lifetime. Not only was every voice sheer perfection but he inhabited every role as if it were him. Harry Secombe's role has always been vastly underrated. But listen to any average *Goon Show*, listen to the way he drives every episode, not only with his natural verve but with his delivery: the speed and diction of which are unsurpassable.



Geoff Kelso, Jonathan Biggins, David James, Richard Cottrell

enthusiasm of the Milligan and Secombe families has been deeply touching.

If anything the play is a tribute to Spike Milligan and his genius. I adore the Monty Python team but *Monty Python's Flying Circus* took six guys, all from university, to write. Milligan was working class, uneducated and – at the time he first started writing the *Goon Show* – unemployed and he did it (mostly) alone. Writing the show for nine long years and at that high a level drove him alas to the edge of madness; but my world would be a lesser place without the *Goon Show* and certainly a greyer one.

## SPIKE MILLIGAN

### STEPHEN DIXON

Spike Milligan was once talking about Eccles, his favourite *Goon Show* character. "Eccles represents the permanency of man, his ability to go through anything and survive. They are trying to get off a ship on the Amazon and lower a boat. When they get to the shore Eccles is already there.

"How did you get ashore?"

"Ho hum, I came across on that log."

"Log... that's an alligator!"

"Ooh. I wondered why I kept getting shorter."

Milligan never achieved Eccles's simple dream of happiness, and comedy is richer for his failure. He lived his life at the end of his mind's tether and was always a man of seemingly irreconcilable contradictions: an anarchist with a passion for conservation, a vulnerable and acutely sensitive exhibitionist, a sophisticated person who preferred to retain a vision of childlike purity.

He was often distinctly unsettling, both offstage and as a writer/performer. The writer and jazz singer George Melly, while



George Orwell's assertion that "whatever is funny is subversive" was never truer than in the case of Milligan. He didn't invent surrealistic radio comedy – nor did he ever claim to – but he opened up the medium with his uncluttered anarchic vision, and his influence since the early 1950s has been vast. It took its toll: "I was trying to shake the BBC out of its apathy. I had to fight like mad and people didn't like me for it. I had to bang and rage and crash. I got it right in the end, and it paid off, but it drove me mad in the process... I'm unbalanced. I'm not a normal person, and that's a very hard thing to have placed upon you in life."

**"I think he widened the horizons of comedy. Created comedy out of things noone else was able to. I think his work was deceptive, some of it looked very silly but it was incredibly complex."**

MICHAEL PALIN

Milligan was educated at the Convent of Jesus and Mary, Poona, and, after his father was posted to Rangoon in 1929, at the Brothers de La Salle; the family stayed in Burma until 1933, when they returned to England to what Milligan described as a fairly impoverished life and where his education continued at the South East London Polytechnic in Lewisham. He worked in a nuts and bolts factory, but had already decided to become an entertainer, and learned to play the ukulele, guitar and trumpet. At one point he won a Bing Crosby crooning competition at the Lewisham Hippodrome.

When the war broke out he joined his father's old regiment and served in north Africa, where he first met Harry Secombe. He began to organise music and comedy shows for the armed forces entertainment organisation Ensa with Secombe and others, and was wounded in Italy. His war experiences later formed the basis for a number of bestsellers, including *Adolf Hitler, My Part In His Downfall* (1971), *Monty, My Part In His Victory* (1976) and *Mussolini, His Part In My Downfall* (1978).

Milligan "sort of wandered around". It was during these wanderings that he renewed his friendship with Secombe, who had been struggling along as a comic at the Windmill Theatre in London's West End which, in a pre-strip club era, provided static nude tableaux. He also made the acquaintance of another young hopeful, Peter Sellers, and the wild-haired and equally anarchic Michael Bentine.

All gravitated to Jimmy Grafton's pub in Westminster, where they would do turns in the back room to entertain each other. And it was there that the seeds of the *Goon Show* were sown.

Grafton was writing jokes for the radio comedian Derek Roy and, impressed by Milligan's unique view of the world, asked him to co-write some material. In this way Milligan wrote for several top comics of the day – Bill Kerr, Alfred Marks and even Frankie Howerd. He also wrote for Secombe and Sellers, who had started to become established, in a modest way, as radio performers. Sellers had the best contacts and first put the idea for the *Goon Show* to the BBC ("Goon" came from a strange being in the Popeye cartoons which Milligan loved).

The corporation was lukewarm, but agreed to give the show – starring Sellers, Milligan, Bentine and Secombe – a trial run under the title *Crazy People*. Thus it began in May 1951, swiftly changing its title and losing Bentine, whose surreal style clashed with Milligan's. It ran, with 26 shows a year, for nine years. It toured the variety theatres as a stage show in the early 1950s, and it was on this tour that Milligan's emotional imbalance began to assert itself. In Coventry his solo spot went badly and he strode to the footlights and raged at the audience: "You hate me, don't you?"

Receiving an affirmative, he threw his trumpet to the stage and stamped on it, and when this was greeted with appreciative applause, left the stage and locked himself in his dressing room. Knowing about their friend's mental instability Secombe and Sellers broke



Jonathan Biggins, David James

Milligan, with or without Grafton or Larry Stephens, wrote all the shows, with Eric Sykes drafted in to help on occasion. Although the show could hardly have existed without Milligan's participation, his difficult behaviour kept him at constant loggerheads with the BBC. However, it was when the programmes ended – at Milligan's instigation – in 1960 that his personal demons started to dominate his private and professional life. "When the Goons broke up I was out of work," he said. "My marriage ended because I'd had a terrible nervous breakdown – two, three, four, five nervous breakdowns, one after other. *The Goon Show* did it. That's why they were so good."

Because of the "difficult" label, he almost had to beg for work, and the first to respond was the actor/manager Bernard Miles, who asked him to play Ben Gunn in *Treasure Island* at the Mermaid Theatre on the edge of the City of London. It was during its successful run that Milligan and John Antrobus wrote the bleak comedy *The Bed-Sitting Room*, which was set in the aftermath of the third world war. It, too, opened at the Mermaid, in 1963, with

His next piece, *Oblomov*, was just as successful, opening at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, in 1964. It was based on the Russian classic by Ivan Goncharov, and gave Milligan the opportunity to play most of the title role in bed. Unsure of his material, on the opening night he improvised a great deal, treating the audience as part of the plot almost, and he continued in this diverting manner for the rest of the run, and on tour as *Son Of Oblomov*.

In the late 1960s he did a number of television series, notably the *World Of Beachcomber* and *Q5*. He also became a favourite on TV chat shows, although it was with some trepidation that the host – be he Michael Parkinson, Eamonn Andrews or Terry Wogan – would introduce him. Milligan rarely had much of an inkling of what he was going to do, even at far more formal, scripted occasions. "I turn up on the day," he said. "They point me at the audience and I do it."

He also turned his attention to the cinema. His films included *The Magic Christian* (1971), *The Devils* (1971), *The Three Musketeers* (1973), *The Last Remake of Beau Geste* (1977) and *Monty Python's Life Of Brian* (1978). On the big screen there was not marked success, for it was impossible to get near the essence of Milligan in short, carefully rehearsed takes.

He worked harder than almost any entertainer one can think of, but seemed to have an imperfect grasp of what was good and what was dashed-off self-indulgence in his prolific output – a *Private Eye* cartoon in 1984 had a bookshop with a sign in the window: "Spike Milligan will be here to write his latest book at three o' clock." Novels, memoirs, verse – words gushed from him in a torrent.

He seemed to mellow in later years, but there was always a hint of the dangerous spark that had brought him to the brink of despair so many times and lit beacons of laughter to cleanse us all. In 2000, to a clutch of awards was added an honorary knighthood. It was honorary because – and earlier the cause of considerable furore – his father's Irish background meant that





*'Money couldn't buy friends, but you get a better class of enemy.'* SPIKE MILLIGAN

# THE GOONS

*'It's a gift and a curse. You get the pain much worse than anybody else but you see a sunrise much more beautiful than anyone else.'*

SPIKE MILLIGAN ON MENTAL ILLNESS







David James, Geoff Kelso, Jonathan Biggins, Tony Harvey

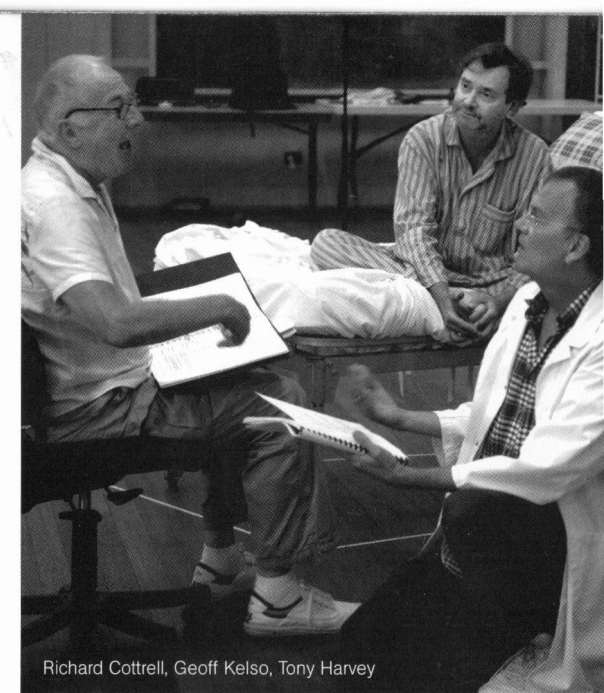
## A GOONOLGY

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1918 Spike Milligan born in India. His father was an Irishman serving in the British Army.</p> <p>1921 Harry Secombe born in Swansea, England.</p> <p>1925 Peter Sellers born in Southsea, Hampshire into a family of entertainers.</p> <p>1934 Spike and his family return to England where he works as a factory hand as well as playing the trumpet for jazz bands.</p> <p>1939 World War Two breaks out. Spike is 21 and is conscripted to serve in the Royal Artillery. Harry Secombe is 18 and sent to serve in North Africa. Peter Sellers, only 14 at the time, is not conscripted.</p> <p>1942 Spike and Harry meet in North Africa while on duty in the Western Desert. They perform in many troop</p> | <p>he becomes a member of the RAF Entertainment Unit and tours with Ralph Reader's Gang Shows.</p> <p>1944 Spike is wounded in action in Italy and hospitalised for shellshock.</p> <p>1945 After drifting through various military jobs in Italy, Spike eventually becomes a full-time entertainer playing with The Bill Hall Trio in jazz/comedy concert parties for the troops.</p> <p>1948 Spike, Harry and Peter are all back in England. Spike is making an unsteady income playing with the Hall trio whilst trying to break into radio. Harry gets a job working as an impersonator at the Windmill Theatre. He meets Peter Sellers and Michael Bentine. Spike, Harry and Michael Bentine meet at Jimmy Grafton's pub, writing skits, jokes and doing impressions. Peter Sellers soon joins the team.</p> |
|---|---|

**"All I ask is the chance to prove that money can't make me happy."** SPIKE MILLIGAN

- 1951 Peter Sellers marries actress Anne Howe.
- 1951 A pilot episode of *The Goon Show* was made in February and the first series was broadcast on BBC in May. The first series was entitled *Crazy People* as the BBC did not like the name *The Goon Show*. Many of the characters later to become popular pop up in the early shows. By the end of the year the show gets its intended title, *The Goon Show*.
- 1952 Spike marries June Marlowe.
- 1952 At the end of the second season Michael Bentine leaves the show. The characters become more regular and the comedy and sound effects more refined.
- 1952 Spike suffers his first breakdown. He tries to kill Peter Sellers with a potato peeler.
- 1953 The original *Goon Show* announcer Andrew Timothy leaves and is replaced by Wallace Greenslade. Spike misses twelve episodes due to mental illness. In the fourth series the show begins to have a single plot giving the show its most recognisable format.
- 1954 The BBC transcription service starts to record shows, making them available to audiences in other countries. The Goons do their Morris Dancers routine at the Coventry Hippodrome.

1954-1959 *The Goon Show* becomes hugely successful and all three performers are household names in the UK and Australia.



Richard Cottrell, Geoff Kelso, Tony Harvey

- 1959 Spike announces that the 9th series will be the last. However, the Goons are presented with a petition signed by listeners to carry on the show.
- 1960 28 January. The last *Goon Show* is broadcast after the BBC pull the plug due to Spike's inability to sign another contract.
- 1961 Wallace Greenslade dies.
- 1961 onwards The Goons embark on successful solo careers. Harry continues to be popular as a singer and entertainer. Peter becomes an international film star appearing in films such as *Dr Strangelove*, *The Pink Panther* and *Being There*. Spike performs onstage and becomes a prolific writer of books, plays, poetry and TV comedy.
- 1972 The Goons reunite to do a special called *The Last Goon Show of All*.
- 1979 Spike appears in a cameo role in *Monty Python's Life of Brian*.
- 1980 Peter Sellers dies aged 55.

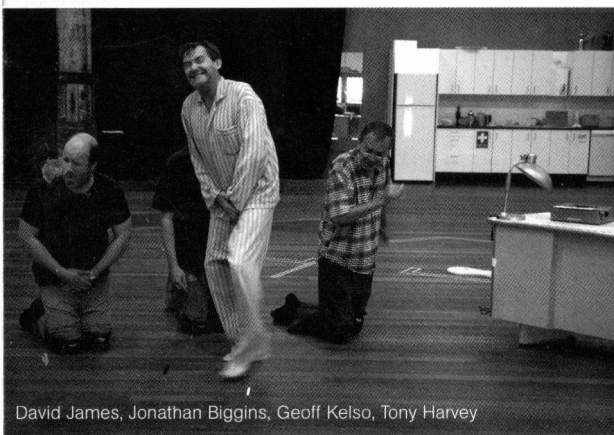


# MEETING SPIKE MILLIGAN

GEOFF KELSO

In 2002, a few months after Spike had died, I (God Save John Howard) performed on stage in a tribute to Spike entitled *I Told You I Was Ill*. This live show at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne was a fundraiser for one of Spike's favourite charities, the Friends of the Earth. It was incidentally (God Save John Howard) recorded by ABC local radio and then broadcast nationally – to a deaf cat (God Save John Howard). Here now is an almost verbatim transcript of the original ABC Sanskrit horsehair and plastic nuclear powered recording of me doing the highly steamed talking:

It was at the end of a show he [Spike] was doing at the Theatre Royal in Sydney. My friends and I, at that time (it was 1980) were writing and recording a radio show on Triple



David James, Jonathan Biggins, Geoff Kelso, Tony Harvey

J, Double J as it was known then, called *Dr Poo*. It was a kind of silly version of *Dr Who*. One of the writers, Steve Johnson and I went to see his show and we took with us some badges that we had made for the fans of our show. Milligan was in great form, he had

We went back to the stage door and it was an open house, he said, "Come in, come in, come in" and there was a fridge full of wine, "Here have some wine" and his mother was there and it was wonderful. He was chatting to everybody and we waited our turn to have a chat with him and eventually we did. We said "Mr Milligan, fantastic show, we do radio." He said:

"Ah good, that's fantastic. I used to do radio. We used to do half a dozen ideas each and then make it up. You do that? Improvising, you know that? Good good."

"We'd like to give you these badges for the radio show we do."

"What's this, DC Pog?"



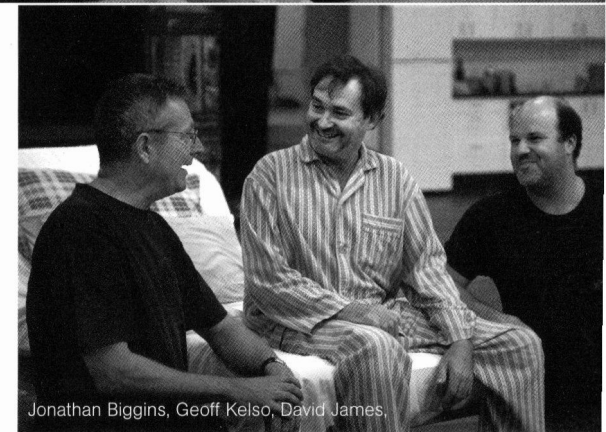
Jonathan Biggins, David James

**"Spike Milligan is a man whose contribution to British culture is incalculable. Since the second world war, in which he served, Spike Milligan has been central to the development of British comedy – one might also say to our actual sense of humour. Everyone knows that, in comedy, very little is truly original. Spike's work is part of that very little."**

BEN ELTON

My friend Steve said, "Mr Milligan, we think that you have created half the Irish jokes in the world. Have you heard this one?" "Go on, Ok"

"Have you heard about the Irish vet who tried to separate a Siamese cat?"



Jonathan Biggins, Geoff Kelso, David James

"Right, there's this man who is training his dog to fly to the moon on rollerskates. Every night he takes the dog outside and points it to the moon and says 'moon, moon'. We think the dog is catching on. There you can use that."



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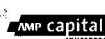


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### Research Sources

The Goon Show Site (thegoonshow.net)  
The Guardian  
BBC (bbc.co.uk)  
A History of The Goons

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Emma Williams, Christian Witz, Charles  
Jarratt, Louise Sykes, Katie Yealland, Eve  
Stievenard, Denis O'Dwyer, Ryan Lobo,  
Kathryn Stuckey, Jamie Conway, Michaela  
Davies, Matt Goodwyn, James Beach,  
Johnny Nasser

Box Office Hamilton Budd, Bill Burns  
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Drummond, Tania Kelley, Adriana Law,  
Ryan Lobo, Eliza Maunsell, Catherine  
McCrorie, Ben Mortley, Luke Rogers,  
Rosanna Scarcella, Anthony Skuse,  
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